Complaints Management Policy

Version	2.1
Responsible Officer	Principal
Authorisation	DCS Board of Management
Effective Date	October 2014
Modifications	May 2015 – Minor changes to wording and flow chart June 2015 – Minor changes to wording and flow chart March 2018 – Change name, review policy
Superseded Documents	This policy replaces the Grievance Policy and Procedures
Review Commencement Date	October 2019 (2 years)
Associated Documents	• DCS Code of Conduct • Staff Development Policy

Devonport Christian School

OUR VISION:

A leading, truly Christ-centred school community where students learn to love God, pursue excellence and flourish to reach their full potential.

OUR MISSION:

Devonport Christian School develops students through high quality, holistic primary education in a Christ-centred school community.

OUR VALUES:

At Devonport Christian School we value…

1. Christ-centredness – in our character and all we do

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Colossians 3:17

2. Holistic Education – enabling children to develop physically, socially, emotionally, academically and spiritually

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all strength ... Love your neighbour as yourself." Mark 12: 30, 31

3. Excellence – doing our best in all things

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord." Colossians 3:23

4. Family Partnerships – working with and supporting care-givers in their role as the child's primary educator

"Bring them (your children) up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

5. Authentic community – serving and supporting all members of our school

"Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another …. and over all these virtues put on love." Colossians 3:12 – 14

6. Godly Leadership – through all levels of the school

"Each one should use whatever gifts he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The **Devonport Christian School** is a Christ-centred school where individuals should feel safe to express their points of view openly, honestly, constructively and in a spirit of love. All members of the school community should work together actively for the common good of the school. In Corinthians 12:12 – 27, St Paul uses the analogy of the church as a human body with all the parts working together to bring about the best Christian environment. Our school is part of the wider church community and so this analogy applies to us as we work to provide the best educational environment for our children, parents and staff.

1. Policy Objective

1.1. Prescribe fair and consistent procedures to resolve complaints in the school community.

1.2. Ensure that complaints and disputes are resolved in a timely manner and, where possible, between the persons concerned.

1.3. Ensure that the Principal and Board Executive are alerted to any complaint discussions that might affect the safety and care of students, parents, staff and others, or may potentially have legal or moral implications.

1.4. Ensure all members of the school community are aware of Association policies for responding to conflict.

1.5. Ensure that our processes comply with the relevant sections of Awards and the Privacy Act.

1.6. Ensure that our response to complaints within the school community is consistent with our Christian approach.

This policy applies to all complaints, grievances, disagreements or disputes between any member(s) of the School community or any persons affected by the school's operations, including the Board of Directors, Principal, staff, students, parents, volunteers, suppliers, contractors and neighbours. This policy replaces all previous Board policies concerning grievance and dispute resolution.

In dealing with complaints, we seek to determine God's will and what is right and just for the people concerned.

2. Biblical Basis

We acknowledge the wisdom of Scripture as advanced by the following references taken from the New International Version of the Holy Bible.

Matthew 5:23-44	Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.
Colossians 3:23-4	Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Jesus Christ you are serving.
Ephesians 5:21	Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
Matthew 18:15-17	If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.
Ephesians 4:32	Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:29	Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
Matthew 18:21-2	Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."
Matthew 6:14-15	For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.
Romans 13:8	Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

The implementation of the resolution process that follows will be tempered by these instructions about Christian love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Christians are exhorted to pray without ceasing, and that where two or three gather in God's name He will be present with them. It would therefore be encouraged that prayer be made an integral part of the process of handling differences and that meetings would normally begin and end with time spent praying.

3. Definition of Terms

Where referred to in this document:

Association means Devonport Christian School Inc.

Award means the Independent Schools (Teachers) Tasmania Award for Teaching Staff, or the Independent Schools (Non-Teaching) Tasmania Award for non-teaching staff.

Staff or Staff Member refers to paid employees or a paid employee of the Association and provisions applying may also be applied to contractors working for the Association.

Senior Staff (eg Higher Duties, Curriculum Development) means any Staff member that has formally been placed in a position of responsibility by the Principal/Board.

Support Person a person to accompany, listen and support. This is not a participative role.

Principal means the Principal of the School appointed by the Board.

Board means the Board of Directors of the Association.

Secretary means the Secretary of the Association.

Complaint includes any disagreement, unresolved difference or negative feeling between any members of the school community, which if left unresolved, will be detrimental to ongoing relationships in the school.

Dispute means a grievance, which cannot be resolved between the parties concerned.

Chain of command refers to:

1. Any Senior Staff member
2. School Management Team (Principal, Business Manager and School Executive Officer)
3. Board Executive

Mediation is a process where an independent person, agreeable to and accepted by all parties in dispute, works with those parties to reach reconciliation or at least a resolution that both can agree to.

Policy Guidelines

4 Introduction

4.1 The Association is committed to forming and maintaining harmonious and cooperative relationships at all levels in the Devonport Christian School community. Where there is disagreement or where relationships break down, we firstly look to the Scriptural principles for resolution.

4.2 This policy is intended to complement the provisions of the Award, but not replace them. Biblical principles are not inconsistent with the Award. They are to be applied in the first instance. Where there is a discrepancy between the Award and the Policy, the Award must be followed.

4.3 In any potential conflict situation, it is helpful that the resolution process begin as soon as the situation has been identified. The longer it is left, the harder it may be to reach reconciliation.

4.4 The Board will ensure that the Principal has the necessary training to fulfil their role under this policy.

5 Complaints Response Process

5.1 The following process is used for the resolution of complaints in the school community. It is based on Biblical precepts and in relation to staffing matters complies with the requirements of the Award. Provided the spirit of the Policy is maintained, the process allows for some flexibility in its application where circumstances warrant.

5.2 Mediation is available at the request of either party at any stage of the resolution process. The mediator must be mutually agreed upon by both parties.

Step One – Informal Discussions

5.3 When differences first become evident, reconciliation is sought through **private and informal steps** involving the parties concerned. No official record is kept of these discussions but both parties are urged to keep diary notes of the event with a summary of the matters discussed and any agreements reached.

5.4 This step may be repeated any number of times until it becomes clear that resolution will not be reached.

5.5 Depending on the parties involved, if the dispute is with or the complaint is against the Head of School – the Principal, and a resolution cannot be reached, a more formal approach may be required in that, it is to be arbitrated by a designated Member of the Board. If the dispute is with or the complaint is against the school Board, external arbitration is to be by a party agreeable to both parties.

5.6 The Principal (or Board Executive if required) is to be advised if it is clear that a resolution cannot be reached.

Step Two – Formal Discussions

5.7 Either party to the complaint may initiate **formal discussions and/or counselling** if not satisfied with the outcomes of the informal discussions.

5.8 Records are kept of these discussions, including any commitments or undertakings given. Both parties are encouraged to sign and keep a common record of discussions. The pro-forma, Form B may be used.

5.9 The Principal/Board Executive must be notified by each party that a formal discussion phase is about to be initiated before formal discussions are entered into, thereby providing the opportunity for early intervention of the issue.

5.10 Following this stage, the person with the complaint or the person the complaint is against may involve a third person for support. Apart from this person, the discussion remains confidential between the parties involved.

5.11 Where a mediator is involved, that person will be independent and acceptable to both parties.

5.12 As a matter of courtesy, depending on the parties involved, the Principal or Board Executive are to be informed of progress toward resolution, although not necessarily the details of the discussions.

5.13 This step may be repeated if it appears reconciliation or resolution may be reached.

Step Three – Formal Mediation

5.14 Where a dispute cannot be resolved as above, **formal mediation** is used in an attempt to resolve the matter.

5.15 Any party to the dispute may initiate step three, particularly if it becomes clear that a resolution cannot be reached by other means.

5.16 An independent person, trusted and accepted by both parties, is asked to mediate in the dispute and document points of agreement and disagreement.

5.17 Where relevant, i.e. the complaint is with a Board member or an employee of the Association (Principal, Teacher or other staff member), the mediator will also report to the Board.

5.18 Records are kept of these discussions, including any commitments or undertakings given. Both parties are encouraged to sign and keep a common record of discussions. The pro-forma, Form B may be used.

5.19 As a matter of courtesy, the Principal is to be informed of progress toward resolution, although not necessarily the details of the discussions.

5.20 This step may be repeated if it appears reconciliation or resolution may be reached.

Step Four – Arbitration

5.21 Where mediation has not succeeded, or in cases where matters relating to the Award or employment conditions are concerned, the final recourse is to external **Arbitration,** through the courts or the Industrial Relations Commission.

6 Documentation

6.1 Full reports will be completed for all but Step One of the Complaints Management Process – the pro-forma, Form B may be used.

6.2 Where a complaint involves a staff member or a volunteer, a full record will be kept of the steps taken. The Board will be kept informed of the progress made toward resolution although not necessarily the details of the discussions.

6.3 Each person involved should keep their own informal records during Step One of the process. The use of diary notes is recommended. Parties may keep more complete records of these discussions for their own use.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

All persons, including students, parents and volunteers are responsible for

7.1 applying Biblical principles in their dealings with each other and those in authority over them.

7.2 seeking God's will by praying earnestly, both individually and when meeting to discuss matters of dispute or discipline.

7.3 alerting the Principal if the grievance discussion they have had with any person responsible for the care of children, concerns actions that might have a negative impact on the safety and wellbeing of children.

Staff Members are responsible for

7.4 taking steps to resolve complaints, disagreements or disputes as quickly as possible by initiating discussions in the Complaints Management process

7.5 following the steps outlined in this policy, and/or allowing them to be followed.

7.6 alerting the Principal or Board Executive if the complaint discussion they have had with a colleague concerns actions that might have a negative impact on the safety and wellbeing of students and/or if it reflects on the fitness of that person to be a teaching or non teaching staff member.

The Principal is responsible for assisting with:

7.7 implementing this policy with their staff as directed by the Board.

The Board is responsible for:

7.17 the review and maintenance of this policy statement and associated documentation.

7.18 implementing this policy for Board members, School management team, Association staff, volunteers and members of the wider community

7.19 disseminating this policy into the Devonport Christian School community

7.20 seeking independent counsel in difficult situations, especially when involved in Steps two to four in the process

7.21 ensuring that all Senior Staff are qualified or skilled to carry out their responsibilities under this policy.

8 Form A – Complaints Management Process Summary – This form must be printed on DCS letterhead obtained from the office

Please refer to the full policy statement to be able to appreciate the "spirit" of the policy.

Mediation is available at the request of either party at any stage of the resolution process. The mediator must be mutually agreed upon by both parties. Parties may incur some financial cost if mediation is requested.

8.1 Step One - Informal Discussions

Informal and private attempts at resolution or reconciliation between the parties concerned. If the matter is resolved, no further action is needed.

8.2 Step Two – Formal Discussion

Board Executive must be notified. Formal discussions held and a record kept (eg Form B). Others may be involved for support or as informal mediators. If resolved, no further action.

8.3 Step Three – Formal Mediation

An agreed Mediator listens to both sides, and documents points of agreement and disagreement. The Mediator seeks reconciliation or a solution acceptable to both. If agreement reached, no further action.

The Principal / Board is kept informed of progress.

8.4 External Arbitration

Through the courts in civil matters, or the Industrial Relations Commission in regards to staffing matters. The solution is no longer in the hands of the disputants.

9 Form B – Record of Complaint – Page 1 This form must be printed on DCS letterhead obtained from the office

9.1 This form may be used to record discussions held in connection with the Association's Complaints Management Policy. A summary of these processes (Form A) is included. Please refer to the full policy document for further detail or to be able to appreciate the "spirit" of the policy.

9.2 Where a record is being kept of the complaint resolution process, the report should be completed jointly and signed by all parties.

9.3 The contents of this Record of Complaint are confidential.

Details: **Student / Parent / Staff / Other _____** (please circle)

Time:

Date:

Place:

People Present: (Name & Position)

Nature of the Complaint
Can you agree on the nature of the complaint, and probable causes and list them here?

10 Form B – Record of Complaint – Page 2 This form must be printed on DCS letterhead obtained from the office

Steps Toward Resolution

Can you agree on steps towards resolution? If so, list them here. If you cannot agree, list the opposing views here. Where possible, set time limits for actions.

Review Date

When is the situation to be reviewed?

Signatures

We agree that the above is a true and complete account of discussion held on this day.

Name – Signature – Date

Name – Signature - Date

Name – Signature – Date

DCS
DEVONPORT
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Form A – Complaints Management Process Summary – This form must be printed on DCS letterhead obtained from the office

Please refer to the full policy statement to be able to appreciate the "spirit" of the policy.

Mediation is available at the request of either party at any stage of the resolution process. The mediator must be mutually agreed upon by both parties. Parties may incur some financial cost if mediation is requested.

Step One - Informal Discussions

Informal and private attempts at resolution or reconciliation between the parties concerned. If the matter is resolved, no further action is needed.

Step Two – Formal Discussion

Board Executive must be notified. Formal discussions held and a record kept (eg Form B). Others may be involved for support or as informal mediators. If resolved, no further action.

Step Three – Formal Mediation

An agreed Mediator listens to both sides, and documents points of agreement and disagreement. The Mediator seeks reconciliation or a solution acceptable to both. If agreement reached, no further action.

The Principal / Board is kept informed of progress.

Step Four - External Arbitration

Through the courts in civil matters, or the Industrial Relations Commission in regards to staffing matters. The solution is no longer in the hands of the disputants.

3 - 11 Jiloa Way Don Tasmania 7310 | PO Box 44D Don Tasmania 7310
(03) 6423 1373 | Fax: (03) 6423 1364 I ABN: 55 849 018 307
Email: admin@dcs.tas.edu.au | Web: www.dcs.tas.edu.au

Attachment B – Record of Complaint – Page 1

This form may be used to record discussions held in connection with the Association's Complaints Management Policy. A summary of these processes (Form A) is included. Please refer to the full policy document further detail or to be able to appreciate the "spirit" of the policy.

Where a record is being kept of the complaint resolution process, the report should be completed jointly and signed by all parties.

The contents of this Record of Complaint are confidential.

Details **Student / Parent / Staff / Other _____** (please circle)

Time:

Date:

Place:

People Present: (Name & Position)

Nature of the Complaint
Can you agree on the nature of the complaint, and probable causes and list them here?

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Attachment B – Record of Complaint – Page 2

Student / Parent / Staff / Other _____ (please circle)

Steps Toward Resolution

Can you agree on steps towards resolution? If so, list them here. If you cannot agree, list the opposing views here. Where possible, set time limits for actions.

Review Date

When is the situation to be reviewed?

Signatures

We agree that the above is a true and complete account of discussion held on this day.

Name – Signature – Date

Name – Signature - Date

Name – Signature – Date

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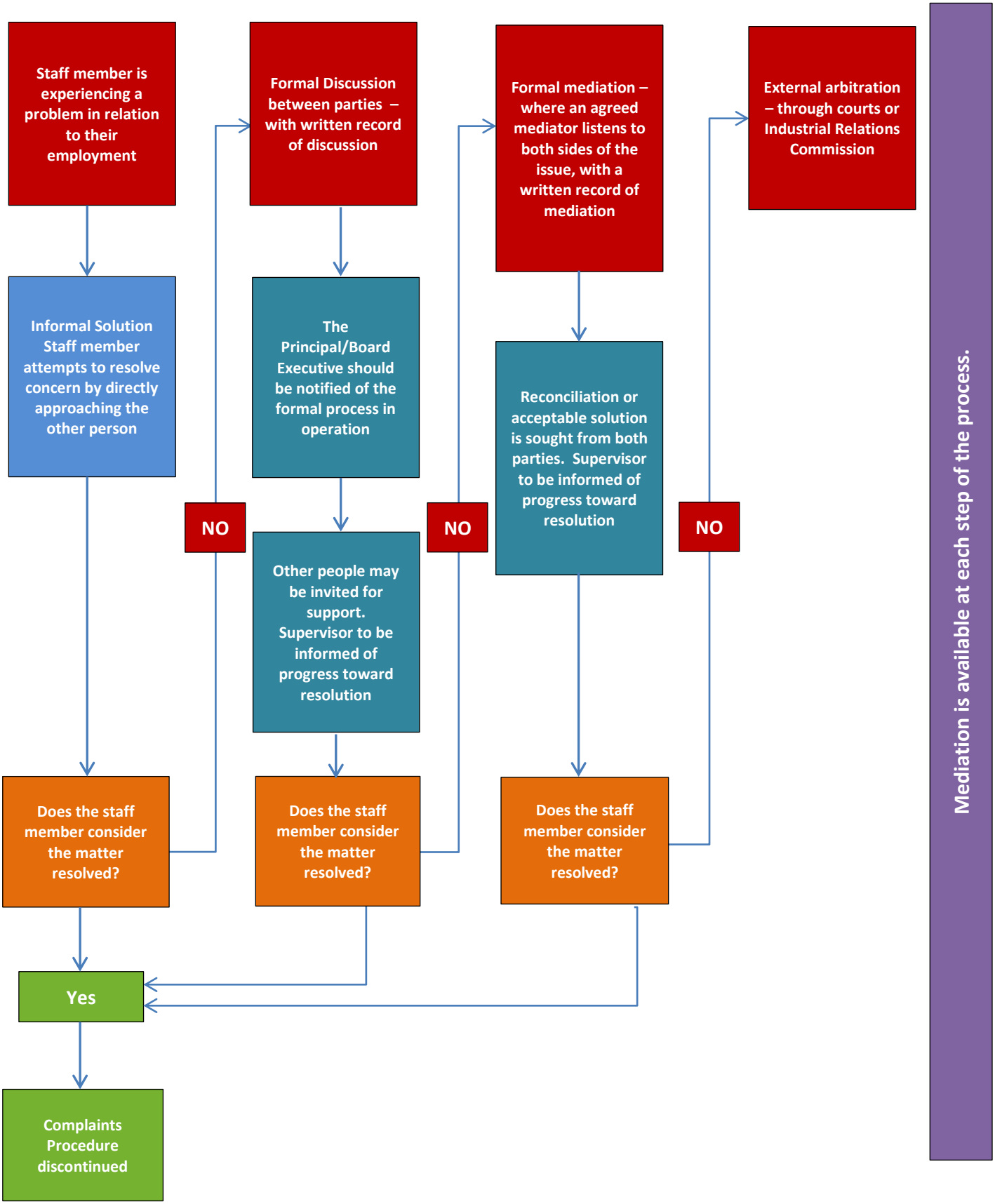
Devonport Christian School

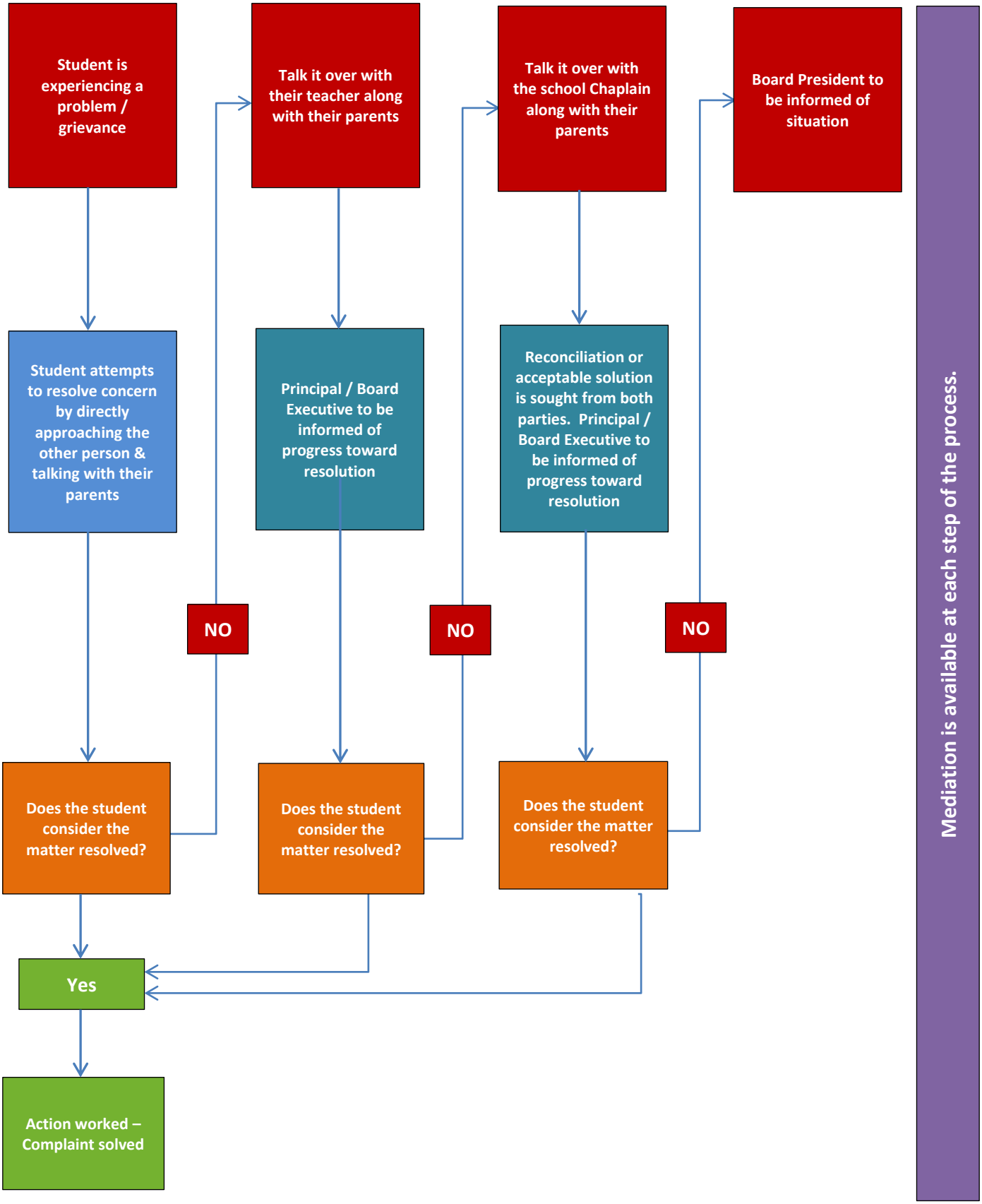
STAFF Complaints Process - to be used in conjunction with the Complaints Management Policy



External arbitration - DCS recognizes the rights of aggrieved parties to have ultimate recourse to resolution through legal processes. Parties may incur some financial cost.

Devonport Christian School

STUDENT Complaints Process - to be used in conjunction with the Complaints Management Policy



External arbitration - DCS recognizes the rights of aggrieved parties to have ultimate recourse to resolution through legal processes. Parties may incur some financial cost.

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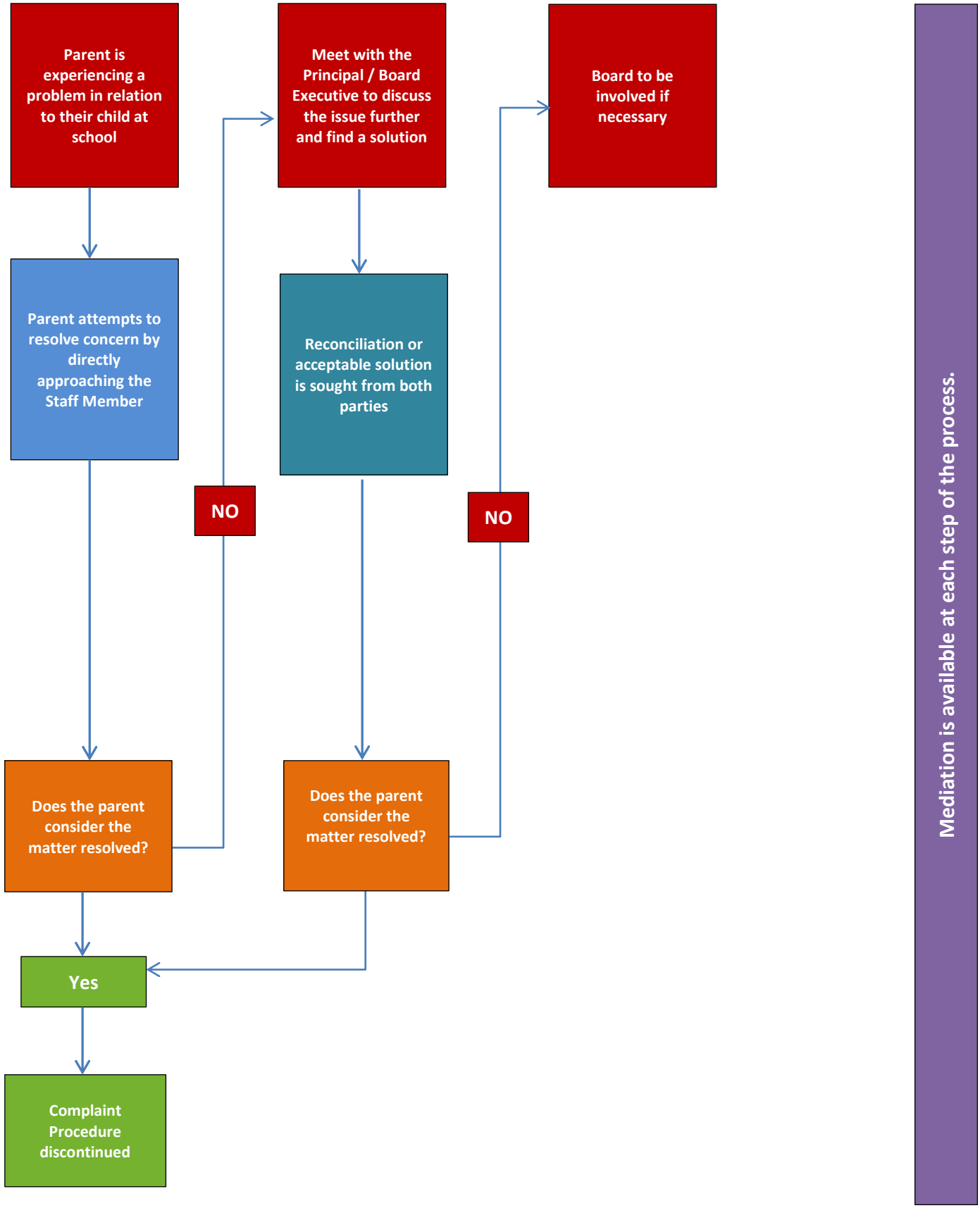
PARENT Complaints Process - to be used in conjunction with the Complaints Management Policy



External arbitration - DCS recognizes the rights of aggrieved parties to have ultimate recourse to resolution through legal processes. Parties may incur some financial cost.

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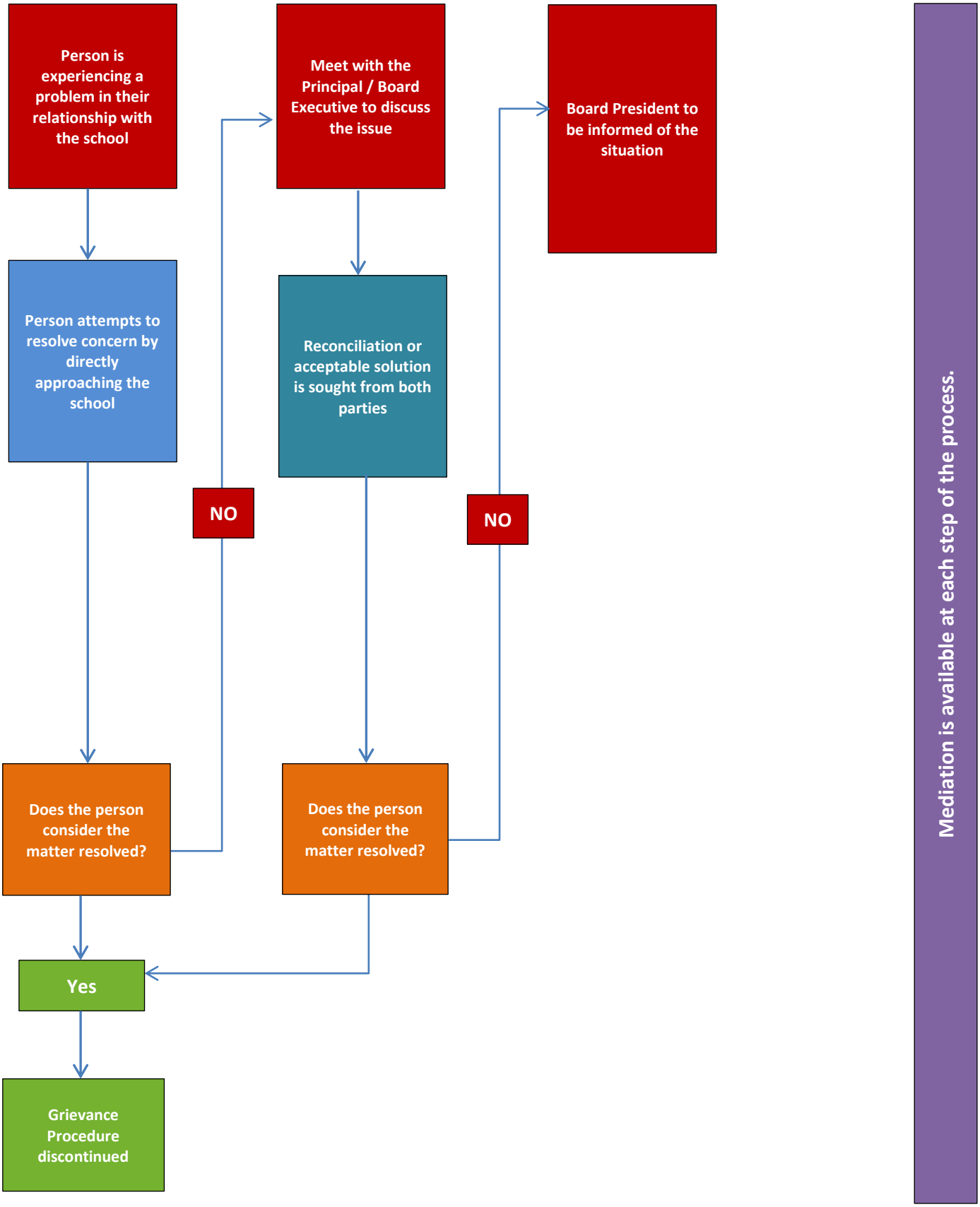
OTHER COMMUNITY PEOPLE - Complaints Process - to be used in conjunction with the Complaints Management Policy



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